requirements for the modified computation in paragraph (d) of this section or the exception in paragraph (e)(5) of this section.

(1) Where the amount of your totalization benefit will be determined using a computation method that does not consider foreign earnings (see § 404.1918), we will find your total years of coverage by adding your—

(i) Years of coverage from the agreement country (quarters of coverage credited under § 404.1908 divided by four) and

(ii) Years of U.S. coverage as defined for the purpose of computing the special minimum primary insurance amount under § 404.261.

(2) Where the amount of your totalization benefit will be determined using a computation method that does consider foreign earnings, we will credit your foreign earnings to your U.S. earnings record and then find your total years of coverage using the method described in § 404.261.

[52 FR 47916, Dec. 17, 1987, as amended at 55 FR 21382, May 24, 1990; 57 FR 22429, May 28, 1992; 60 FR 17444, Apr. 6, 1995; 60 FR 56513, Nov. 9, 1995]

AVERAGE-MONTHLY-WAGE METHOD OF COMPUTING PRIMARY INSURANCE AMOUNTS

§ 404.220 Average-monthly-wage method.

(a) *Who is eligible for this method.* You must before 1979, reach age 62, become disabled or die to be eligible for us to compute your primary insurance amount under the average-monthly-wage method. Also, as explained in § 404.230, if you reach age 62 after 1978 but before 1984, you are eligible to have your primary insurance amount computed under a modified average-monthly-wage method if it is to your advantage. Being eligible for either the average-monthly-wage method or the modified average-monthly-wage method does not preclude your eligibility under the *old-start* method described in §§ 404.240 through 404.242.

(b) *Steps in computing your primary insurance amount under the average-monthly-wage method.* We follow these three major steps in computing your primary insurance amount under the average-monthly-wage method:

(1) First, we find your average monthly wage, as described in § 404.221;

(2) Second, we look at the *benefit table* in appendix III; and

(3) Then we find your primary insurance amount in the benefit table, as described in § 404.222.

(4) Finally, we apply any automatic cost-of-living or *ad hoc* increases that became effective in or after the year you reached age 62, or became disabled, or died before age 62, as explained in §§ 404.270 through 404.277.

§ 404.221 Computing your average monthly wage.

(a) *General.* Under the average-monthly-wage method, your social security earnings are averaged over the length of time you can reasonably have been expected to have worked under social security after 1950 (or after you reached age 21, if later).

(b) *Which of your earnings may be used in computing your average monthly wage.* (1) In computing your average monthly wage, we consider all the wages, compensation, self-employment income, and deemed military wage credits that are creditable to you for social security purposes. (The maximum amounts creditable are explained in §§ 404.1047 and 404.1096 of this part.)

(2) We use your earnings in your *computation base years* in computing your average monthly wage. All years after 1950 up to (but not including) the year you become entitled to old-age or disability insurance benefits, or through the year you die if you had not been entitled to old-age or disability benefits, are computation base years for you. Years after the year you die may not be used as computation base years even if you have earnings credited to you in them. However, years beginning with the year you become entitled to benefits may be used for benefits beginning with the following year if using them would give you a higher primary insurance amount. Years wholly within a period of disability are not computation base years unless your primary insurance amount would be higher if they were. In such situations, we count

all the years during the period of disability, even if you had no earnings in some of them.

(c) *Number of years to be considered in computing your average monthly wage.* To find the number of years to be used in computing your average monthly wage—

(1) We count the years beginning with 1951 or (if later) the year you reached age 22 and ending with the year before you reached age 62, or became disabled, or died before age 62. Any part of a year—or years—in which you were disabled, as defined in § 404.1505, is not counted unless doing so would give you a higher average monthly wage. In that case, we count all the years during the period of disability, even if you had no earnings in some of those years. These are your *elapsed years.* (If you are a male and you reached age 62 before 1975, see paragraph (c)(2) of this section for the rules on finding your elapsed years.)

(2) If you are a male and you reached age 62 in—

(i) 1972 or earlier, we count the years beginning with 1951 and ending with the year before you reached age 65, or became disabled or died before age 65 to find your elapsed years;

(ii) 1973, we count the years beginning with 1951 and ending with the year before you reached age 64, or became disabled or died before age 64 to find your elapsed years; or

(iii) 1974, we count the years beginning with 1951 and ending with the year before you reached age 63, became disabled, or died before age 63 to find your elapsed years.

(3) Then we subtract 5 from the number of your elapsed years. This is the number of your *benefit computation years*; we use the same number of your computation base years in computing your average monthly wage. For benefit computation years, we use the years with the highest amounts of earnings, but they may include years of no earnings. You cannot have fewer than 2 benefit computation years.

(d) *Your average monthly wage.* After we find your benefit computation years, we compute your average monthly wage by—

(1) Totalling your creditable earnings in your benefit computation years;

(2) Dividing the total by the number of months in your benefit computation years; and

(3) Rounding the quotient to the next lower whole dollar if not already a multiple of $1.

Example: Mr. B reaches age 62 and becomes entitled to old-age insurance benefits in August 1978. He had no social security earnings before 1951 and his year-by-year social security earnings after 1950 are as follows:

Year	Earnings
1951	$2,700
1952	2,700
1953	3,400
1954	3,100
1955	4,000
1956	4,100
1957	4,000
1958	4,200
1959	4,800
1960	4,800
1961	4,800
1962	4,800
1963	4,800
1964	1,500
1965	0
1966	0
1967	0
1968	3,100
1969	5,200
1970	7,100
1971	7,800
1972	8,600
1973	8,900
1974	9,700
1975	10,100
1976	10,800
1977	11,900

We first find Mr. B's elapsed years, which are the 27 years 1951–1977. We subtract 5 from his 27 elapsed years to find that we must use 22 benefit computation years in computing his average monthly wage. His computation base years are 1951–1977, which are the years after 1950 and prior to the year he became entitled. This means that we will use his 22 computation base years with the highest earnings to compute his average monthly wage. Thus, we exclude the years 1964–1967 and 1951.

We total his earnings in his benefit computation years and get $132,700. We then divide that amount by the 264 months in his 22 benefit computation years and find his average monthly wage to be $502.65, which is rounded down to $502.

(e) *''Deemed'' average monthly wage for certain deceased veterans of World War II.* Certain deceased veterans of World War II are ''deemed'' to have an average monthly wage of $160 (see §§ 404.1340 through 404.1343 of this part) unless their actual average monthly wage, as found in the method described in paragraphs (a) through (d) of this section is higher.

§ 404.222 Use of benefit table in finding your primary insurance amount from your average monthly wage.

(a) *General.* We find your primary insurance amount under the average-monthly-wage method in the benefit table in appendix III.

(b) *Finding your primary insurance amount from benefit table.* We find your average monthly wage in column III of the table. Your primary insurance amount appears on the same line in column IV (column II if you are entitled to benefits for any of the 12 months preceding the effective month in column IV). As explained in § 404.212(e), there is a minimum primary insurance amount of $122 payable for persons who became eligible or died after 1978 and before January 1982. There is also an alternative minimum of $121.80 (before the application of cost-of-living increases) for members of this group whose benefits were computed from the benefit table in effect in December 1978 on the basis of either the old-start computation method in §§ 404.240 through 404.242 or the guaranteed alternative computation method explained in §§ 404.230 through 404.233. However, as can be seen from the extended table in appendix III, the lowest primary insurance amount under this method is now $1.70 for individuals for whom the minimum benefit has been repealed.

Example: In the example in § 404.221(d), we computed Mr. B's average monthly wage to be $502. We refer to the December 1978 benefit table in appendix III. Then we find his average monthly wage in column III of the table. Reading across, his primary insurance amount is on the same line in column IV and is $390.50. A 9.9 percent automatic cost-of-living benefit increase was effective for June 1979, increasing Mr. B's primary insurance amount to $429.20, as explained in §§ 404.270 through 404.277. Then, we increase the $429.20 by the 14.3 percent June 1980 cost-of-living benefit increase and get $490.60, and by the 11.2 percent June 1981 increase to get $545.60.

[47 FR 30734, July 15, 1982, as amended at 48 FR 46142, Oct. 11, 1983]

GUARANTEED ALTERNATIVE FOR PEOPLE REACHING AGE 62 AFTER 1978 BUT BEFORE 1984

§ 404.230 Guaranteed alternative.

(a) *General.* If you reach age 62 after 1978 but before 1984, we compute your primary insurance amount under a modified average-monthly-wage method as a *guaranteed alternative* to your primary insurance amount computed under the average-indexed-monthly-earnings method. We also compute your primary insurance amount under the old-start method (§§ 404.240 through 404.242) and under the special rules for a person who had a period of disability (§§ 404.250 through 404.252), if you are eligible. In §§ 404.231 through 404.233, we explain the average-monthly-wage method as the alternative to the average-indexed-monthly-earnings method.

(b) *Restrictions.* (1) To qualify for this guaranteed-alternative computation, you must have some creditable earnings before 1979.

(2) You or your survivors do not qualify for a guaranteed-alternative computation if you were eligible (you attained age 62, became disabled, or died before age 62) for social security benefits based on your own earnings at any time before 1979 unless—

(i) Those benefits were disability insurance benefits which were terminated because you recovered from your disability or you engaged in substantial gainful activity; and

(ii) You spent at least 12 months without being eligible for disability benefits again.

(3) This guaranteed alternative method applies only to old-age insurance benefits and to survivor benefits where the deceased worker reached the month of his or her 62nd birthday after 1978 but before 1984 and died after reaching age 62.

§ 404.231 Steps in computing your primary insurance amount under the guaranteed alternative—general.

If you reach age 62 after 1978 but before 1984, we follow three major steps in finding your guaranteed alternative:

(a) First, we compute your average monthly wage, as described in § 404.232;

(b) Second, we find the primary insurance amount that corresponds to